DFS: GROWTH THROUGH A NON-LAID-BACK APPROACH TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

dfs
making everyday more comfortable

CUSTOMER
DFS

WEB SITE
WWW.DFS.CO.UK

INDUSTRY
RETAIL

LOCATION
UK, GLOBAL

KEY CHALLENGES
• Increase website uptime
• Creating a scalable IT infrastructure
• Improve the customer experience

SOLUTION
DFS turned to a cloud-first infrastructure, making use of a VMware-powered multi-cloud environment.

BUSINESS BENEFITS
• Seamless customer experience
• Growth in business revenues
• Improved website uptime

DFS, the UK's largest furniture producer, wanted to guarantee unbeatable service and quality to all its customers across any of its shopping platforms, whether ordering products in-store or online. Having seen a huge increase in mobile and online shoppers, especially those researching new purchases, the retailer wanted to have the infrastructure in place to create a seamless customer experience throughout the year, but specifically during two peak shopping phases: the 'Guaranteed by Christmas' ordering period in September, and the Boxing Day Holiday sales.

Opting for a multi-cloud approach with VMware, through Rackspace, the retailer can roll out IT transformation and migration projects, such as a new commerce platform, seamlessly – helping it stay ahead of the competition and cope with busy periods. As a result, it has drastically improved its online and mobile customer experience, achieving market-leading status and reporting a double-digit increase in sales.

DFS is one of the UK's leading furniture retailers, with 155 stores across the UK and Ireland. Founded 45 years ago, the company is extremely proud of its heritage in the furniture making industry and is dedicated to being a world-class British business, always looking for ways to improve the service it provides its customers. Although traditionally a high street retailer, 50% of the upholsterer's web traffic now comes through a mobile device, so its online retail platforms are increasingly crucial.

The Challenge

As the market leader in its industry, DFS is constantly focusing on ensuring its customers have the best shopping experience – whether in-store or online. From an online perspective, the retailer has seen phenomenal growth in the number of customers using mobile over the last few years – with 50% of its traffic now coming through a mobile device, often with consumers conducting their initial research on their phones before going on to make a purchase.

"The retail industry is both a changing landscape and an extremely competitive industry. It's important to us that we're at the forefront of the sector, offering the best experience for our customers across all touchpoints. From a digital point of view, that means our website working every time, no matter when they visit or via which device – tablet, mobile phone or desktop," says Russell Harte, CIO, DFS. "We want their shopping process to be really easy – after all, if it's in

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"VMware is second to none in the cloud space. Its technology was going exactly where we needed, with its multi-cloud solution allowing us to manage not just a VMware environment, but clouds across AWS as well."

RUSSELL HARTE
CIO
DFS

VMWARE FOOTPRINT
• VMware vSphere
• Rackspace Private Cloud powered by VMware on AWS

any way a strenuous experience, they may not complete their purchase or come back to shop with us again."

Like any retailer, DFS goes through periods during the year where it has significant spikes in traffic, whether it's their 'Guaranteed by Christmas' promotion or the Boxing Day Holiday sales. "At these times of year, the traffic is phenomenal – far higher than during the other months. From an infrastructure perspective, it's imperative we're in a position where we can handle that traffic and provide a seamless experience. Clearly our systems struggling to cope with an increase in traffic doesn't just have reputational ramifications, the financial risk with the loss of business if our site goes down is significant; if our Website is not operating for even a day, then that's a loss of multi-millions in sales."

The Solution

DFS wanted a solution that could flex according to customer demand, rather than having to run an environment at full capacity year around. After all, that would involve unnecessary costs from both an operational and staff resourcing perspective.

The business chose to move to a scalable, cloud-first infrastructure through Rackspace. Making use of VMware's Cloud through Rackspace®, the retailer can handle spikes in online traffic year-round by expanding its existing infrastructure, virtualized with VMware vSphere®, as and when necessary, taking advantage of a multi-cloud approach from VMware.

"VMware is second to none in the hybrid cloud space, so we knew we could rely on its technology. We've used its virtualization solutions for several years, but the ability to build on what we'd created internally with an infinitely scalable infrastructure was a great prospect. VMware's hybrid cloud technology was going exactly where we needed, with its multi-cloud solution allowing us to manage not just a VMware environment, but clouds across other providers as well.

We've been on a transformation journey over the last few years, and the scalability of our solutions is important for us. We're still a relatively small Technology team internally, so we rely on our leading technology partners to help us fulfil the business agenda."

Business Results & Benefits

Moving to a multi-cloud environment based on VMware's technology has transformed the way DFS runs its IT. With a fully scalable infrastructure, the business can guarantee the best online and mobile customer experiences at any given time – staying ahead of the competition and coping with any busy period,ensuring we can support the customer demand.

Furthermore, after integrating its environment with the public cloud, DFS has been able to roll out new IT transformation and migration projects, including a new commerce platform, seamlessly. Not only are these projects carried out with zero downtime, but customers can benefit from improved shopping interfaces and therefore experiences that come with an innovative new platform.

"Ultimately, competition is as fierce in retail as it always has been, and will continue to get even more fierce as we move forward. Having the right IT infrastructure is really important to make sure we can fulfil the business needs and allow us to move as fast as we possibly can," says Harte.

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"Working with VMware and Rackspace has helped us achieve market-leading status as a brand consumers can trust, helping us to report a double digit increases in online sales for the past three years."

RUSSELL HARTE
CIO
DFS

"Working with VMware and Rackspace for an infrastructure that supports our business needs and objectives is vital, helping us to report a double-digit increase in sales for the past three years. On top of that, because I know we've got trusted partners that can run our infrastructure to scale and with minimal down time, I can focus on important things for the organisation, building new innovations from a digital and technology point of view."

Looking Ahead

Another project DFS will be working on is enabling its store colleagues to interact with digital signage and video walls to show consumers images of sofas in different colours and in other customers' homes.

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